

Telegrams: 'NATINMED HAVER, LONDON.'

Telephone: HAMPSTEAD 2232.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH,  
HAMPSTEAD, LONDON, N.W. 3.Whitsunday. May 28<sup>th</sup> 1944.

My dear Michael.

This day, being a Sunday and a holiday and my birthday, I intend to dedicate to my friends in the North American Continent and <sup>so</sup> perform a social duty which, mainly through lack of time but sometimes through lack of heart, I have sadly neglected ~~to~~ in these trying war years. I think that those of us who have been right here in the last four and half years have been, almost to a man, bad cross-pundits. The reasons I give above: the strain of labour and lack of anxiety have made letter-writing a difficult task.

Yet, you on your side have been nearer in spirit to us over here than ever before. This came out in a remarkable way a few weeks back when Avery's latest paper reached us: excitement and pleasure and keen satisfaction, to his many friends and here, of his triumphs, showed, as little else has done, how near our thoughts are to you on your side. A few of us met for some time previous in the Royal Society's apartments; but it was Avery and his work, and our memory of him and his mother, kindly, hospitable nature, which filled our hearts & minds

Of the great tribulations through which we have passed, I shall write  
soon. Some day, and I hope it will be soon, we shall speak  
of them as one to another, undivided by vast distances of sea & land.  
Our unwariness was nearly complete - a perpetual monument to our  
desire to live at peace with all men. 1940 was a time, to an  
adult Englishman who has been through the last war, which beggars  
description. I got my family out of London into a house I had taken  
a year before <sup>in the Cotswolds</sup> (immediately after the Austrian Anschluss) and I went to  
live with Dale at the Institute. We slept in the banqueting room, now,  
is a part of the old library, taking our turns at five waking  
by night and half sleeping by day. Got the Institute kept going,  
in spite of our having no money of our own to the services.  
Living about the middle of your life was not pleasant, especially at  
night, in London town; and even here, where we only got the  
noises and the bad smells at the railway termini, disturbed  
right for time were the rule. Curiously, it was Hitler's attack on  
Russia which brought us, here in London, the relief; because I  
think we felt the red-ties had overreached himself, got in  
his own job, and that henceforth he would have other things to do  
than the indiscriminate bombing of London. As the war it  
has worked out that way. The worst, of course, which brought us  
the greatest sense of relief was the coming of your mighty, inevitable  
contribution to the Allied cause. I remember vividly the same sense

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of relief in the last war. The two events, to me at least, were curiously alike: I knew that the Allied cause would conquer and prevail & however long the end might be in coming, there could only be one end, and we knew that it would be. It meant working harder than ever, but whereas before there had been anxiety and sometimes even doubt, now there was certainty of success and hope. Looking back, one sometimes wonders what, in a remarkable epoch, has been the most outstanding feature and work. One thinks of Dunkirk and all the tragedy of that work before and with it: the pitiful lack of men and warlike material: the defencelessness of our island in that crucial year. But, when I think of it, I personally note the conduct and bearing and behaviour of the ordinary Londoner - the Cockney dweller in mean streets, poor in his world's goods, but rich, beyond the description of ordinary men, in the possession of courage, self-reliance, humour, good fellowship, helping his less fortunate neighbours, putting up with discomfort, exposure almost daily to physical danger, - all without a murmur of complaint. His home - or his neighbour's - might become a heap of rubble; but

they would get a little Union Jack from somewhere, to stick on their  
knives and, with a jest and a smile, forced to live with one  
another, and make the best of it. All this had to be seen  
to be believed and understood; and it was like the case of a prisoner  
to deal adequately with this aspect of our island story. The  
Londoner - and by this I mean the foreign citizen who lived in  
the districts near the river - was surprised he met of his countrymen  
and made a name for himself which will never die. The way our  
food supplies have been managed I rate very highly, as everybody else  
does. Luxuries disappeared almost at once, but, thanks to your  
Cabinet, enough of the essentials have always been here - a bit  
scarce at times, it is true - and every citizen has had his share.  
There has been no profiteering as far as I know, and no striving  
for other things, food supplies, to which the individual citizen is not  
entitled. We have seen a dull and monstrous diet for a long  
time, but we have had enough; and enough in the scientific  
"nutrition" sense, to maintain this nation in remarkable health  
and vigor. It has been all done by our Ministry of Food.  
The hard manual workers have had more than the sedentary workers,  
the milk (in short supply) has gone to the children, the <sup>sick</sup> old, and  
the expectant and nursing mothers. This Ministry - and our  
Government - have made a few mistakes, but the ordinary man  
in the street has felt that the State was trying to give him a square

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deal, and, on the whole, succeeding. The public health, like the public morale, has been maintained at an extraordinary high level. There was an increase in C.S.M., but thanks to chemotherapy, the fatality rate is nothing compared with last year: there is an increase in T.B. among young girls & young women which is disturbing; and there has been an increase in V.D. But, in nearly every other disease, there has been an actual improvement in the health of the people. This is, in fact, unique; and I consider it the fact that epidemic after epidemic - influenza, measles, etc. - which, by all the rules ought to appear, do not appear, because we are practically cut off from Europe. The story of the maintenance of the public health of our people in this way will read like a romance one day.

As for personal matters, Dale left this Institute nearly two years ago, having reached the retiring age. He is as active as ever though, and divides his time between being President of the Royal Society, Director of the Royal Institution (he has succeeded to the office held by Dargy, Tizard, Dewar and Bragg) and he holds some very important and responsible positions in connection with the scientific aspects of war problems. Harrington succeeded Dale as Director of this Institute, and you can imagine

The thrill of pleasure which this gave is all of a kind, it is the same. I have had Bismarckism as my main interest. We feel about that - there his unique manner with him, and there is a little reflected glory. I see Harrington daily; and in spite of all his handicaps - short stock, inadequate buildings, the interest and turmoil of war conditions, the fact that those of us who are getting on in years (I am 63 today!) are rather tired and not fresh and full of vigour - he is making a great success of his job. For myself, I have had a multitude of jobs which have covered me over - Tetanus antitoxin and tetanus toxin vaccines and more: active immunisation against diphtheria: gas gangrene antitoxin, subly and more: penicillin standard and unit and, now, additional production. Some of it has been interesting, all of it exacting. Of course, I have had to keep my Department of Principles and Standards going; and since December <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ I have had to satisfy the State with all the 30 standards established by the League of Nations. My wife came back to the laboratory and nobly helped me out. I have failed - I hope only momentarily - in my attempt to get international agreement (i.e. this country and the American continent) about a standard and unit for Penicillin: but I think this will come, for what it there can only be Chaco, as Dale is now actively interested in the matter.

I enclose a note from Olga to Mrs. Kitchener. I have asked her to give you the names of the girls. Elizabeth is always thrilled when you letters come and she sees the stamps. She is a WRN and is at sea - on the sort of job which boys would give their eyes for. We all send our love and regards to you all, remembering those happy days in England and hoping for a quick end to the war so that we can reunite them. Ever yours,  
Penicillin: Harkness.